

My legislation would increase this amount from \$60,000 to \$81,000 to make it comparable to the maximum loan amount available to the public. After giving so much to their nation, veterans deserve the same opportunities for home ownership given to every American.

HONORING ERIC ALVA

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I come before you today to pay tribute to Staff Sergeant Eric Alva, a resident of my district in San Antonio. I stand here with both a great sense of pride for S.Sgt. Alva's bravery and with a heavy heart for the sacrifice he ultimately made for our country. Mr. Speaker, S.Sgt. Alva was recently injured by a landmine explosion while on duty in Iraq. As a result, S.Sgt. Alva lost his lower right leg. There is no doubt that S.Sgt. Alva has experienced a tremendous loss, but through his service he has gained respect and gratitude from myself and his fellow Americans.

The ancient historian Herodotus once said "Great deeds are usually wrought at great risks". S.Sgt. Alva accepted this great risk when he chose to wear the uniform of the United States Marines. He accepted this risk fearlessly, with pride and conviction. Although his pledge to serve and to defend this nation is a great deed alone, the loss he has suffered in service merits particular distinction. It is because of the selfless actions of men and women like S.Sgt. Alva that American freedom and democracy endures.

Although this war has brought sorrow and suffering to some in our nation's armed forces and to their loved ones, their sacrifice serves as a symbol of the American spirit. Honoring those who are injured and killed in battle who stand up bravely to fulfil their duty is a fitting testimony to the values this country was founded upon.

In recognition of S.Sgt. Alva and those like him who are serving their country during this time of war, I implore the world, that in their honor, we achieve the one goal we are all fighting for: Peace.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING REFORM OF INTER- NAL REVENUE CODE

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 9, 2003

Mr. DeFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I am voting yes on H. Con. Res. 141, a hortative resolution with no legally-binding impact, but which has a lot of predictable political rhetoric about the need to reform the enormously complex and loophole-ridden federal tax code.

I am voting yes because the "whereas" clauses in the resolution are by and large inoffensive, if deliberately vague about the true intention behind the rhetoric, which is to fundamentally reform the U.S. tax code in a way

that eases the tax burden on the rich and corporations and raises the burden on middle and lower-income Americans.

I agree that the federal tax code is too complex. Billions are spent trying to comply with its provisions. Though, I would also point out that the wealthiest Americans and most profitable corporations also spend billions in an effort to avoid their fair share of the federal tax burden.

The resolution is also correct to say the tax code is full of loopholes and special interest exemptions. Though, I would point out that these loopholes and exemptions, which largely benefit the most powerful in our society, did not get into the tax code by accident or osmosis. They were put there by Members of Congress at the behest of wealthy campaign contributors.

Although I am voting yes, I want to go on the record in opposition to the second "resolved" clause of the resolution, which in my opinion is too deferential to the tax reform concepts laid out in the February 2003 Economic Report of the President.

The President's report lays out its utopian vision of reduced, or ideally zero, taxes on corporations, reduced taxes on capital, and increased taxes on consumption and wages, which would hurt middle and lower-income Americans.

Mr. Speaker, if the U.S. tax code is going to be overhauled, I believe it should be made more progressive than it is today. That would mean eliminating special interest loopholes for corporations and wealthy Americans. Cracking down on tax dodging by powerful individuals and businesses. Doing so would allow us to relieve some of the tax burden on middle and lower-income Americans. Further, any overhaul of the federal tax code must not add to the crushing burden of debt we are leaving to the next generation.

Like Adam Smith, author of the pro-capitalism tome "The Wealth of Nations," I believe in progressive taxation. Adam Smith wrote, "The subjects of every state ought to contribute toward the support of the government, as nearly as possible, in proportion to their respective abilities; that is, in proportion to the revenue which they respectively enjoy under the protection of the state ... [As Henry Home (Lord Kames) has written, a goal of taxation should be to] 'remedy inequality of riches as much as possible, by relieving the poor and burdening the rich.'"

PROTECTION OF LAWFUL COMMERCE IN ARMS ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 9, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill—(H.R. 1036) to prohibit civil liability actions from being brought or continued against manufacturers, distributors, dealers, or importers of firearms or ammunition for damages resulting from the misuse of their products by others:

Mr. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1036, the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. This bill

unfairly grants the gun industry immunity and takes away an individual's or state's ability to hold gun manufacturers, gun dealers, and gun trade associations accountable to negligence and product liability standards that every other industry is subject to.

The bill perpetuates the gun industry's disregard for public safety and holds up their "see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil" approach to gun manufacturing and distribution. The gun industry should be held accountable to its consumers and victims in the same way that every other industry is. As it is, guns are one of the few consumer products that are exempt from health and safety regulations.

Furthermore, this bill would void a number of pending cases around the country which seek to hold the gun industry accountable for its actions. Specifically, if passed into law, this bill would nullify a case currently moving through the Illinois Supreme Court. The case was brought against a number of gun manufacturers, gun distributors, and gun dealers by the City of Chicago and Cook County who allege that these entities have created a public nuisance by making guns available to juveniles in the Chicago area. No one can dispute that kids have access to guns. A nationwide survey conducted by the Illinois based Teenage Research Unlimited found that 41 percent of teenagers surveyed reported that they could get a handgun if they really wanted to. Furthermore, the Chicago Police Department reported that, in 1999, 165 offenders under the age of 21 were charged with murders involving a firearm.

One death by a handgun is too many. But when 666 people are murdered in one year in just one city, as was the case in Chicago in 2001, we must wake up to reality and demand that something be done. Unfortunately, this bill takes us backwards and gives immunity to the very industry that has the power to regulate the manufacturing and distribution of its products.

I am disappointed that this bill is on the House floor today, and I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on H.R. 1036.

AN HISTORIC DAY

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member wishes to commend to his colleagues the April 10, 2003, editorial from the Lincoln Journal Star, entitled "Cheers for Toppling of Saddam." Indeed, the editorial captures the enthusiastic spirit of the Iraqi people as American troops liberated them from the horrific, repressive regime of Saddam Hussein.

CHEERS FOR TOPPLING OF SADDAM

On Wednesday the war in Iraq reached a historic 'tipping point,' as Brig. Gen Vince Brooks termed it, symbolized by the toppling of a 40-foot statue of Saddam Hussein in a main square of Baghdad.

Hundreds of Iraqis, especially the Shiite Muslim majority that suffered under Saddam's predominantly Sunni Muslim government, celebrated with cheers, exchanging high fives with U.S. Marines.

A group of Iraqis dragged the head of the Saddam statue through the streets. Others battered it with sticks and shoes.

Few predicted that this historic moment would occur so soon after a war of less than three weeks. President George W. Bush, in fact, warned Americans on March 23, "It is evident that it will take awhile to achieve our objective."

And in fact, more military action lies ahead. Parts of Baghdad are not secure. Coalition ground forces have not yet moved into other cities, including Tikrit, Saddam's birthplace 100 miles north of Baghdad. No one knows with certainty whether Saddam is alive or dead.

But Iraqis on Wednesday grasped that Saddam's 24-year rule of terror had come to an end.

Also abundantly clear is the new prowess of the U.S. military. The brilliant campaign to remove Saddam so far has produced a death toll far less than predictions and in fact less than the toll of the Desert Storm war in 1991.

The combination of smart weaponry, high-tech surveillance equipment and instantaneous communication turned coalition troops into a potent force capable of making split-second adjustments to battlefield conditions, even in urban environments.

Drone aircraft fed television images of streets and rooftops. Ground troops called for precision air strikes rather than fighting blind. Troops even used hand-held computerized translators that allowed them to communicate with Iraqis.

The advanced technology, training and updated strategy brought success at minimal cost more quickly than many dared hope.

So Wednesday was a day for celebration. "He's gone? He's gone?" chanted a group of boys in the Kurdish city of Irbil. "Bush No. 1 Bush No 1," shouted young men in Baghdad. Women held their babies for American troops to kiss. Women and children handed them flowers.

And coalition troops were making discoveries that showed why there was dancing in the streets at the realization that Saddam's grip was loosed forever. In Basra, Iraqis showed journalists the "White Lion" jail where they said Saddam's secret police tortured prisoners with beatings, mutilations, electric shocks and chemicals. Similar discoveries were being made elsewhere in Iraq.

The cheers of today might be soon forgotten as Iraqis begin the task of rebuilding their country and establishing a new government. And it must be acknowledged that this historic moment came despite objections from scores of nations around the globe.

Nonetheless, it was gratifying on Wednesday to witness the end of the brutal reign of Saddam Hussein.

HONORING THOMAS SACCO

HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Thomas Sacco, a veteran of World War II. After waiting 58 long years, he has finally been awarded the Purple Heart that he earned as a young private while serving his country in Europe.

Private Sacco was barely 18 years old when he volunteered to serve as a paratrooper in the famous and sometimes feared 101st Airborne division.

He was wounded in the town of Noville, Belgium. As his outfit advanced toward the Axis Army he was struck by shrapnel in his left arm and back and rendered unconscious.

58 years later his heroism and sacrifice is being recognized by the United States Government.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to call Thomas Sacco a constituent and I ask you to join with me in thanking him for his service.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION DEALING WITH PRISON RAPE

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I introduced in the House legislation which concerns a problem that has been ignored by too many for too long: prison rape. I am pleased and grateful that my colleague from the Commonwealth of Virginia, Rep. ROBERT C. SCOTT is an original cosponsor of this legislation.

I believe in vigorous prosecution of criminals and tough sentences on offenders. However, prison rape has nothing to do with being tough on crime; it has to do with making our communities safer, reducing recidivism, and controlling the spread of communicable diseases. This bill would require prisons to establish tough standards to address the issue of prison rape. Experts have established that roughly 13 percent of the over 2 million prisoners in the United States have been victims of rape in prison. Many of these inmates who are raped contract HIV, hepatitis, and other diseases. Upon release, these individuals may then spread these diseases and their rage—contracted in prison as a result of prison rape—to individuals in their community.

Prison rape causes psychological trauma, which may lead its victims to act out in an aggressive manner upon leaving prison, possibly committing further crimes which will result in their reincarceration in an already overcrowded prison system. Additionally suicide is the leading cause of death behind bars and sexual harassment, such as rape, is the leading cause of prisoner suicide.

Last year on Capitol Hill, a mother of a 16-year-old-boy, who was repeatedly raped in a Texas prison, offered a grim tale of her son's abuse. She said her son reported the attacks to prison officials but was told "(rape) happens every day, learn to deal with it. It is no big deal." The boy ultimately hanged himself in his cell. He had been arrested for starting a fire in a dumpster.

The trauma caused by prison rape cannot be underestimated. No matter where the survivor ends up, severe psychosis is the most common outcome of prisoner rape. Sexual assault can often break a prisoner's spirit. In the advanced stages of rape trauma syndrome, for example, a survivor's mood often swings between deep depression and rage. Prisoner rape may be the quickest, most cost-effective way of producing a sociopath.

According to researchers, the fact that most men on death row were sexually abused earlier in life should come as no surprise. Indeed, it is a fact that society ignores at its own peril. Prison rape perpetuates a vicious cycle of violence and trauma which starts with a prisoner being raped and that prisoner often committing acts of aggression and sexual harassment either within prison or in the community upon his release. Indeed, prison rape survivors

often become rapists themselves in a demeaned attempt to regain what they think of as their "lost manhood."

Some prison rape victims retaliate by murdering their rapists, receiving added years to their sentence and further burden the prison system. Studies show that prison rape costs the taxpayer in recidivism and increased violent crime. Inmates—often nonviolent, first-time offenders—will come out of a prison rape experience severely traumatized and will often leave prison more violent than when they entered. Prison rape costs raped prisoners their dignity and costs society monetarily and psychologically.

Combating prison rape is also an issue of human rights and basic humanity. A nation cannot turn its back on thousands of people who are under the care of the state, and being raped and traumatized while under that care. Prison rape is a form of torture. The body of a rape victim may heal, but the emotional damage caused by prison rape may never be ameliorated. As a nation which rightfully stands up for human rights around the world, and which has the best human rights record in the world, we must act now to remove this blight from our record; we must act now to stop the inhumane and degrading practice of prison rape.

The nation has ignored prison rape for too long. The United States Supreme Court has ruled that deliberate indifference to prison rape is a violation of the Constitution. In order to be true to our nation's founding principles, in order to end the cycle of violence and degradation, in order to further the safety of our prisons and society, the passage of this legislation to address prison rape is vital.

I urge my colleagues to join in support of this legislation.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 1720, VETERANS HEALTH CARE FACILITIES CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. ROB SIMMONS

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I am introducing a new measure, the "Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act," that I intend will begin to address what has become a troubling and lingering problem in our Nation's veterans health care facilities: a crumbling and substandard patient-care infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, for the past several years, we have noted that the President's annual budget for VA health care has requested little or no funding for major medical facility construction projects for America's veterans. As we indicated last year in our report to the Committee on the Budget on the Administration's budget request for fiscal year 2004, VA has engaged in an effort through market-based research by independent organizations to determine whether the present VA facility infrastructures are meeting needs in the most appropriate manner, and whether services to veterans can be enhanced with alternative approaches. This process, called "Capital Assets Realignment for Enhanced Services," or "CARES," has entered into its second phase within the Department of Veterans Affairs. While VA has set an